



State of Utah

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## NEWS RELEASE

May 11, 2009

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# Utah observes 100<sup>th</sup> year Of issuing license plates

Nearly everything concerning vehicle registration has changed dramatically since Utah issued its first license plate 100 years ago Monday.

However, license plates are still issued primarily to verify vehicle ownership and assist law enforcement agencies.

When the first plates were issued in 1909, the two-dollar registration fee provided the owner with a two-inch aluminum disc upon which a serial number was embossed by the owner. The owner was then instructed to attach the plate to the side of the car or the dashboard.

The number, along with a large U suffix letter, was then to be painted on the auto or represented on a number plate which was to hang on the back of each vehicle. During the first year, only 819 plates were issued.

Scott Christensen, a member of the Board of State History, is among the avid Utah license plate collectors. He owns one of the first plates issued on the first day of licensing on May 9, 1909. It was originally registered to a Packard owned by Charles A. Walker of the renowned Walker Bank family.

"I started collecting Utah license plates when I found some at my grandpa's farm back in the 1970s," Christensen says. "They are fun to collect and each one is an artifact. It's a hobby that exposes people to geography and history."

Currently there are over 2.3 million license plates registered in Utah for on-road vehicles, says Charlie Roberts, spokesman of the Utah State Tax Commission, which oversees Division of Motor Vehicle operations.

Of course the greatest number of these, 2,026,411 to be exact, is for passenger vehicles, light trucks and motorcycles," Roberts says. "But people also register heavy trucks, trailers, travel trailers, and other vehicles."

The DMV strongly encourages residents to register their vehicles online or by mail whenever possible.

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“Last year we had over 1 million people standing in our office lines who did not need to be there,” Roberts said. “Unless you are receiving new license plates, you can usually complete the registration from the comfort of your own home or at one of our On-The-Spot locations.”

On The Spot authorized renewal stations are emission or safety inspection stations that offer one-stop inspection and registration renewal services. There are approximately 300 Utah businesses participating with the DMV in this program.

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#### **Attached Photo Information**

**This photo is of a Utah plate that was issued on May 11, 1909. The plate is owned by collector Scott Christensen and was originally issued for a Packard owned by Charles A Walker of the Walker Bank family.**

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